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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [OSCE](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: THE OSCE IN UZBEKISTAN: HARD TO TELL WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

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REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a meeting with Ambassador Norland on February 18, Ambassador Venczel, head of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission in Uzbekistan, said that Uzbekistan's "lack of trust" makes it very difficult for the OSCE to implement many of its local projects. Venczel's initial meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Kamilov was "positive" but "cautious" and their discussion ranged from the stabilization of Afghanistan to the OSCE's mandate in Central Asia. The OSCE has proposed projects corresponding to all three of its "dimensions"-politico-military, economic and environmental, and human-but has not yet received a positive response from the Government of Uzbekistan (GOU). (On February 25, Venczel told PolEcon Chief that the OSCE has received a list of "tendentious" GOU questions about its project proposals.) Some elements within the GOU apparently do not want Uzbekistan to improve its relations with the international community. End Summary.

THE FUTURE OF THE OSCE IN UZBEKISTAN

¶2. (C) Ambassador Venczel met with Deputy Foreign Minister Kamilov shortly after the latter's return from the United States, where he served as Ambassador for the past six years. Venczel described Kamilov as generally positive, but detached and unemotional. Although he said that Kamilov was not as critical as Foreign Minister Norov generally is, Venczel found it difficult to assess Kamilov's intentions in regards to the OSCE. Kamilov described the OSCE (and all other international organizations) as overly bureaucratic and "behind the times," and criticized the OSCE for developing projects that do not reflect the interests of host nations. (Comment: Kamilov is considered to be fairly progressive and pro-Western by Uzbek standards. He appears to be cautiously reengaging in Uzbek politics after his time in Washington, and he may be wary of making a false move. Rumor has it Kamilov could replace Foreign Minister Norov in coming months. End Comment.)

¶3. (C) Venczel believes that the GOU does not trust its international partners, perhaps because it wants to exercise strict control over anything that happens within Uzbek borders. The OSCE continues to have trouble getting GOU approval and support for proposed projects; they are still waiting for a GOU response to the new project proposals that they submitted in November. (Note: On February 25, Venczel told PolEcon Chief that the GOU finally received a diplomatic note responding to the proposals-with a list of 17 "tendentious" questions about the proposed projects that seemed to foreshadow their eventual rejection. Although he believes that the GOU sent those questions in order to lay the groundwork for a negative response, he intends to answer the questions as soon as possible. End Note.) In addition, the GOU frequently tries to change existing projects after the budget is already set. Venczel reminded Kamilov that the OSCE is not profiting from any of its joint programs with Uzbekistan; rather, the OSCE's programs add value to Uzbekistan. Venczel told us that despite Uzbekistan's gradually improving record of international cooperation, he believes there are still elements within the GOU that do not want relations with the West to improve.

UZBEKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

¶4. (C) Venczel commented that Kamilov seemed skeptical about the prospects for an OSCE role in Afghanistan; however, Kamilov said that the coalition has a better chance of controlling the situation in Afghanistan than the Soviets did. A stable Afghanistan is important to Uzbekistan for both economic and security reasons. There is also a large ethnic Uzbek minority in Northern Afghanistan, and the GOU may have some contacts within the Taliban. The GOU does not want the Taliban to return to power in Afghanistan, but it may be reluctant to get deeply involved in the coalition's efforts because it does not trust the coalition to stay in Afghanistan until its problems are resolved. Venczel saw signs that Russian agents may also be spreading disinformation about US involvement in the region in order to make the GOU nervous. For example, Russians may be spreading rumors that the USG is supporting the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, just as it supported mujahedeen in Afghanistan during Soviet times.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) Comment: The OSCE's current predicament suggests that the USG's improving relationship with the GOU is not necessarily part of a broader Uzbek trend towards international cooperation. Some international organizations and European embassies are really struggling to make headway with the GOU, suggesting that, once again, Uzbekistan is playing a balancing game in its foreign policy. Some elements, particularly within the security apparatus, appear bent on finding ways to undermine

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cooperation with the West. End Comment.
NORLAND